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EDITORIALS

THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

WE wish to call the attention of our readers to an article on page 21: "Should the Cathedral of St. John the Divine Have One or Two Spires?" by Mr. Huss.

This is a portentous question. There has been already considerable controversy over the matter and it should be settled as soon as possible before proceeding any further with the plans made by Messrs. Cram & Ferguson. In these they suggest for the central feature two spires instead of one (see page 22).

To solve the problem quickly: would it not be a wise thing for the trustees of the cathedral to order made in carton or plaster cheap models of various schemes for different designs of a large central spire and others involving two spires and then have them exposed somewhere for a time sufficient to allow citizens—professionals and laymen—to study this question and express their views? At a given time the consensus of opinion for one or the other may be polled and the matter settled to the satisfaction of the majority.

This is not a technical question. It is a matter of the emotions wherein a layman of culture is often a better judge than an architect, because many artists are rendered unfit to judge not only the works of others, but even their own, through an ingrained habit of looking at works of art too much from a technical standpoint.

This prospective, noble monument is not a field for a display of "individualism" on the part of any one or two artists. Or for the exploitation of

any æsthetic theory. There should be only one aim before us all—to make it, if possible, the most sublime and universally appealing of all the World-Cathedrals.

Mr. Huss makes one strong argument: St. Patrick's on Fifth Avenue having two spires, would it not be an advantage to both cathedrals if St. John the Divine on Morningside Heights had only one massive spire? to accentuate in that way the individuality of both edifices and make any competition between them as to composition or design impossible, just to prevent "odious comparisons"! This has appeared for a long time to many a powerful argument in favor of the central tower or one-spire plan—above all, if the top or truncated part of the spire is made wider at the base and higher and as beautiful as possible.

This is not a small matter and should not, in the hurly-burly of the war, be forgotten for a moment. For this war will stop sometime and we are sure that then when citizens learn that the cathedral—no matter who pays for it—will belong to everybody, no matter how humble they may be, their affection for it will increase and especially when they feel that this structure so commanding in its site is truly the acme of beauty and composition in architecture. He owns a work of art most who understands it best and loves it the most. As fast as this sense of ownership steals over the indifference of citizens, they will rejoice in realizing that the grandest results have been obtained by the combined efforts of our inspired artists.

"THE TAJ MAHAL" BY COOPER

(See Frontispiece)

AKBAR, emperor of the conquering Moguls who ruled northern India during the latter part of the sixteenth century, is considered the greatest monarch that Hindustan ever knew—for we can not take account of the sovereigns who are enshrined in the ancient literature of legend and myth. He was a reformer who tried to stop the marriage of children and permitted the remarriage of widows while forbidding the burning of them on the pyres of their deceased husbands. Liberal and wise as he was, another Mogul emperor who lived a century later is far better known to the world because he had a soul attuned to art and caused to be erected near Agra a building which has been the pride of India from his day. This Shah Jehan, a contemporary of Oliver Cromwell, was a ruthless rebel and fratricide, against whom his sons rebelled in turn; they defeated and imprisoned him. If the earlier Akbar had built two such beautiful structures as are the Taj Mahal and the Pearl

Mosque at Agra, he would be remembered, and along with this memory of him would have followed the recollection of his good policy and deeds. The imperial villain who succeeded him lives through the art of his architects.

As every one knows, the Taj is a mausoleum of white and colored marbles which Shah Jehan erected for himself and his favorite wife Nurmahal to honor a promise made to her dying prayer. Over twenty years were spent on it. Shah Jehan superintended personally the whole structure from the vaults in which he came to be laid beside his spouse to the airy turrets that flank the main building and even to the gold tip of the central dome. This glittering shaft represents in very conventionalized form the golden umbrella that was the symbol of their overshadowing power among remote Assyrian sovereigns as well as among conquerors of later date. Like the old vanished palaces of the Tigris and Euphrates the tomb springs from a terrace